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Activity of the international community in Europe after the Second World War within the scope of the International Refugee Organization as a model of the aid action towards refugees¹

Abstract

The International Refugee Organization (IRO) was the first specialized agency created by the United Nations. It operated between 1947 and 1951 and had under its mandate the masses of displaced persons (DPs) and refugees remaining outside of their countries of origin in the immediate post-war context. The purpose of this paper is to describe the main fields of activity of the IRO and to point out those aspects of its action that could be an inspiration for the future activities of the international community towards the resolution of the refugees issue in a changed contemporary context of this problem. The author claims that as the activity of IRO was the suitable and efficient way to solve the DPs and refugees problem at the time of the crisis connected with the massive presence of refugees, it merits a deeper examination as a temporary instrument of the international community also nowadays, during such critical periods.

Keywords: *refugees, displaced persons, DPs, International Refugee Organization, immediate post-war period, resettlement, repatriation*

¹ This paper was realized within the frame of the project Sonata 10 of the National Science Center NCN: *Activity of the International Refugee Organization in the post-war Europe: The case of the caring action towards Polish displaced persons and refugees, 1947-1951*, Reference no. UMO-2015/19/D/HS3/02361 (for the years 2016-2019).

The purpose of this paper is to present and analyse the activity of the international community towards refugees in Europe in the immediate post-war period, precisely between 1947 and 1951, within the scope of the International Refugee Organization (IRO), taking into a special consideration its aid action towards refugees from Poland, the most numerous national group among all IRO's wards. Furthermore, the author of this paper endeavours to point out those aspects of the former IRO's activity that could be an inspiration for the future activities of the international community towards the resolution of the refugees issue in a changed contemporary context of this problem. The examination of this topic bases on the analysis of the archival documents and of the existing literature of the subject.

Antecedents and origins

The International Refugee Organization was the first specialized agency of the United Nations and created by the United Nations. Its main goals were the comprehensive relief action towards the displaced persons and refugees that found themselves beyond the borders of their countries of origin, the help in repatriation process of those displaced persons from different countries that desired to return to their homelands and had not done it before, the establishment and realization of the plan for mass resettlement of those displaced persons and refugees that did not want to return to their countries of origin, mainly to the overseas (extra-European) areas. Additionally, the IRO provided a number of refugees under its mandate with the legal protection, fulfilling the quasi-consular functions. Last but not least, the IRO dealt with the question of the searching for lost relatives by its specialized field – the International Tracing Service.

In many aspects the IRO's work was the continuation of the former forms of the aid to displaced persons and refugees via United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGCR). Before the Second World War two organizations devoted to helping strictly defined categories of refugees acted under the auspices of the League of Nations: the Nansen International Office for Refugees and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees Coming from Germany. On 1st January 1939 both of them were replaced by the High Commissioner of the League of Nations who acted till the end of 1946, simultaneously with the IGCR, until this last organization took over the High Commissioner's

duties. The IGCR, acting between 1938 and 1947, had been initially concentrated on refugees from Nazi Germany and Austria. Since 1943 its work covered all European refugees. Its main goal was to maintain the refugees forced to leave their countries of origin as well as the aid in resettlement of individuals and families from the strictly listed countries (Skran 1986; Northedge 1986; Marrus 2002; Metzger 1996).

The work of UNRRA, between 1943 and 1947, had been focused on the repatriation of displaced persons to the countries of their origin and on the distribution of relief supplies, provision of the relief services and aid to the economic and agricultural rehabilitation, mainly by the support for countries damaged by the Second World War (Gemie, Humbert, Reid 2011; Laptos 1997). From the point of view of UNRRA authorities the reluctance of the considerable party of the displaced persons from Eastern and Central Europe against the repatriation to their homelands was very hard to understand. Although the countries of origin of DPs strongly supported the repatriation of their nationals, many of DPs did not want to return to their homelands fearing new communist governments or because of the very hard economic situation of the Central and Eastern European countries having become people's democracies.

At the end of the Second World War there were more than 11 million displaced persons in Europe, excluding those of German origin. About 1,9 million of them were DPs of Polish nationality on the territory of Germany and further 350 000 Polish DPs were in Austria (Holborn 1956, p. 20; Łuczak 1993, p. 21; Pilch 1994, p. 22; Wyman 1998).

Displaced persons were people who, due to the war and a decision of the occupational authorities, had found themselves outside borders of a country of their pre-war residence. Thus, unlike refugees, displaced persons (the so-called DPs) were the passive objects of actions of the third party, in this case of the occupational authorities of the Axis powers. In contrast, according to the posterior Refugee Convention from 1951, refugees were people who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it" (*Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees* 1951, Art. 1). This means that refugees were the

active subjects of their acts and that, unlike DPs, refugees had taken the decision about being outside their countries of origin.

UNRRA was an organization supported by forty-four governments and some of them were not in mutual agreement about its essential rules and policies. Moreover, in the context of the immediate post-war period, UNRRA had a problem of the insufficiency of trained staff due to the fact that many experienced people had been already engaged by the military authorities, as the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) and after its liquidation in July 1945, the Control Council for Germany (CCG), or by national governments.

When the mission of UNRRA was getting to the end, it became evident that a future, new international organization taking care about displaced persons and refugees still remaining in Europe and in other parts of the world should be created basing on the highly qualified, international staff and on the rule of responsibility of the Member States for either administrative or operational costs of the activity of the new organization.

In July 1946 the US and British delegates to the Executive Committee of UNRRA proposed the establishment of the resettlement programme for non-repatriable displaced persons that could serve the new organization – “International Refugee Organization”. This motion has been approved by the Executive Committee and it was a main reason of the withdrawal of the UNRRA authorities by the Soviet Union.

During the next few months, IGCR signed or worked on signing a number of resettlement agreements with Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, France, Great Britain, Netherlands, Morocco, Peru, Tunis, Union of South Africa and Venezuela. On the 3rd June 1947 the member governments of IGCR decided to transfer its funds and duties to IRO from 1st July 1947. On the same date, UNRRA also turned over its funds and functions to IRO (Holborn 1956, pp. 22-23).

Creation and duties of the IRO

The Constitution of the IRO was approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations, after long discussions, on 15 December 1946. 18 countries voted for and 5 countries voted against the creation of the IRO, while 18 other countries were abstained

from the voting (Holbron 1956, p. 45)². The IRO was “a non-permanent organization (...), a specialized agency to be brought into relationship with the United Nations”, created to deal with the whole problem of displaced persons and refugees, financed by 26 member states that had signed the IRO Constitution. These were the following countries: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Republic of China, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, France, Great Britain, Guatemala, Honduras, Iceland, Italy, Liberia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Peru, the Philippines, Switzerland, the United States of America and Venezuela. 18 of them finally ratified the document.

The main payer to the budget of the IRO were United States. Among the member states of the IRO were neither the Soviet Union nor any other country of the people's democracy. Thus Poland was not a member state of the IRO. In theory, every member state of the United Nations could become a member state of the IRO. The headquarters of the agency was set up in Geneva. The IRO staff all over the world consisted of about 2500 persons of 40 nationalities and the most numerous were British (32–38% of the whole staff), then Americans (16–18%), French, Dutch, Belgians and Canadians (Holborn 1956, pp. 84, 88, 100 – Annex 2).

On 11 February 1947 the First Session of the Preparatory Commission of the IRO (PCIRO) took place in Geneva. To ensure the full effectivity of the PCIRO and its change into the IRO, fifteen member states of the organization who could ensure 75% of the operational budget of the IRO should sign and ratify the IRO Constitution (Holborn 1956, p. 54). Initially, the PCIRO was planned as just a planning body for the future action but in fact, it became a fully operational agency during the year 1947. That is why although the PCIRO was changed into the effective IRO only in 1948, for the purpose of this paper both, PCIRO and IRO, are called just “IRO”.

The European IRO missions operated in the main areas of the activity of this organization. There was one mission in each of the British, French and U.S. zones of

² The countries voting for were: Belgium, Canada, China, Cuba, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Great Britain, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Iceland, Iran, Lebanon, Liberia, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippine Republic, Union of South Africa, Uruguay, the USA and Venezuela. The countries voting against were: Byelorussian SSR, Poland, the Soviet Union, Ukrainian SSR and Yugoslavia.

occupation in Germany and one single mission for all three western zones of occupation in Austria. The last main IRO mission in Europe was located in Italy. The IRO offices operated also in other European countries.

Over time, the displaced persons that were rejecting the principle of repatriation to their countries of origin started to be denominated “refugees”. Just the name of the new agency – International Refugee Organization – and its new main mission – the aid in resettlement of refugees and of remaining masses of DPs in a new country of residence – emphasized the essential change of the international community’s idea of how to solve the DPs and refugees problem. The positive attitude of the IRO administration towards resettlement was, among other reasons, due to the fact that an important part of the IRO’s staff was composed of clerks from the USA and additionally the IRO employed a certain number of the DPs at place, hostile to the repatriation. Once a DP refused to return to his country of origin, he became refugee under the IRO mandate and once the repatriation action ceased, all the IRO wards were refugees.

During the whole period of the IRO’s existence, between 1947 and 1952, the expenditures of the organisation amounted to 428 505 335 \$. The finances came from the contributions of 18 member governments (more than 93%) with additional incomes from UNRRA and IGCR funds and other sources (less than 7%). The biggest contributor to the IRO budget was the U.S. government that provided with 45,75% of the whole IRO incomes for operational activities and 39,89% for administration. The second biggest contributor was Great Britain that financed 14,75% of the IRO’s operational expenses and 11,48% of those for the administration (Holborn 1956, pp. 102-103).

If we take into consideration only the contributions actually paid by the member governments of the IRO during the whole period of IRO’s existence (between 1st July 1947 and 7 February 1952), the USA provided with 59,49% and Great Britain with the 19,12% of the total payments to the IRO budget. The complete statement of the contributions paid by the member governments of the IRO during its whole existence is shown in the Table 1.

Table 1. Statement of contributions actually paid by member governments to the IRO

Member state of the IRO	Contributions paid 1 st July 1947-7 February 1952	Percentage of the total contributions received by the IRO
Australia	9 194 156 \$	2, 31%
Belgium	5 262 255 \$	1,32 %
Canada	18 164 674 \$	4,56%
China	5 381 044 \$	1,35%
Denmark	2 491 948 \$	0,62%
Dominican Republic	209 826 \$	0,05%
France	21 652 462 \$	5,43%
Great Britain	76 218 086 \$	19,12%
Guatemala	149 802 \$	0,04%
Iceland	75 272 \$	0,02%
Italy	8 290 709 \$	2,08%
Luxembourg	147 002 \$	0,04%
Netherlands	4 766 750 \$	1,19%
New Zealand	2 299 784 \$	0,58%
Norway	2 299 784 \$	0,58%
Switzerland	4 033 698 \$	1,01%
USA	237 116 355 \$	59,49%
Venezuela	843 195 \$	0,21%
TOTAL	398 596 802 \$	100%

Source: Own calculations of the Author basing on the Annex 5 to Holborn 1956), p. 122.

Eligibility, care and maintenance

As long as the DPs and refugees under the IRO mandate had not yet been repatriated, resettled or re-establish, the IRO was responsible for their care and maintenance inside or outside camps. The IRO action was much larger than the provision for the basic needs of life (including the nutrition, clothing and medical care), as it included the services

as employment, education, vocational training, religious services, cultural activities and child-care programmes. In case of the refugees living outside of camps, the care and maintenance from the IRO covered a cash assistance via allowances or individual aid for a defined purpose as well as the programme of vocational training.

The major aim of the IRO care and maintenance programme was to prepare its wards to their future independent life. The IRO's work inside camps and the screening of potential refugees living outside of camps were supported by national committees composed of representatives of DPs communities. In the U.S. zone of occupation in Germany the following national groups of DPs and refugees had their committees accredited to the IRO zone headquarters: Bielorrussians, Czechoslovaks, Estonians, Hungarians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Poles, Russians and Ukrainians. The Jewish refugee population was well organized too, usually beyond the differences of nationality (citizenship).

On the 1st July 1947 the IRO took over the administration of the DP camps in the western zones of occupation in Germany. While in the British zone of occupation in Germany the IRO was supported by the oversight and supply from the British military authorities, in the U.S. and French zones the occupational authorities did not help in the IRO's action towards DPs and refugees after the liquidation of UNRRA.

Also on 1st July 1947 the IRO took over the tasks so far executed by UNRRA in the U.S., British and French zones of occupation in Austria but the IRO administration was responsible to the Allied Council for Austria (ACA), composed of the commanders of the military occupational authorities. The ACA retained the competencies within the scope of the aid for DPs and allied ex-prisoners of war (XPOWs) until 1948 in the U.S. zone of occupation, until May 1949 in the British zone and until October 1951 in the French zone, before passing this issue to the Austrian authorities (Pilch 1994, pp. 19-20; Pilch 1997, p. 305). On 1st July 1947 smaller operational IRO offices were opened in Belgium, France, the Netherlands and in Switzerland. The gradual transfer of the full responsibility towards refugees inside camps in Italy to IRO took place later and ended in 1950.

In order to enjoy the IRO's protection, the "eligibility" of a potential DP or refugee had to be established by the IRO administration. In case of doubtful files or to serve as an appeal tribunal, the Review Board for Eligibility Appeals was created. The procedure of registration of refugees by the IRO, that in case of the positive result ended by the

reception of the IRO identity card by an applicant, finished on 1st October 1949. The exception was made for unaccompanied children found after that date, a number of “neo-refugees” arriving in an area of IRO activity before 15 October 1949 and persons in need of legal and political protection only. After 30 June 1950 the care and maintenance were continued only for DPs and refugees in process of repatriation or resettlement, and for so-called “hard core” cases – aged or sick wards of IRO requiring permanent assistance, refusing their repatriation and without real chances for the resettlement (Holborn 1956, pp. 66-67).

The care and maintenance of DPs and refugees were complemented by the voluntary societies accredited to the IRO. While the IRO was limited by its mandate with respect to its attitude towards political problems, the voluntary agencies cooperating with the IRO were independent at this point. These agencies helped in many aspects of the IRO's work, while the IRO subsidized their activities or made available for them some facilities from other sources (in case of the western zones of occupation in Germany). Among the most important voluntary societies accredited to the IRO were American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC), British Red Cross, Church World Service, Council of British Societies for Relief Abroad, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), Jewish Agency for Palestine (JAFP), Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad, National Catholic Welfare Conference – War Relief Services (NCWC), Polish Red Cross (*Polski Czerwony Krzyż*), World ORT Union, World's YMCA and World's YWCA.

The IRO administration as well as the local authorities of the occupied ex-enemy country where the masses of DPs lived waiting for the repatriation to their homelands or, more and more often, for the resettlement to another country, wished to employ as many as possible DPs in the local economy, for the period of waiting for the future movement. According to the IRO statistics, by 30 September 1947, 242 406 DPs were employed inside and outside the camps, including 140 666 in camps, hospitals and central IRO administration, 32 520 working for private employer outside the camps, 31 282 employed by the military administration outside the camps and 2 942 working within the IRO military projects inside the camps. Among those DPs are counted also 28 786 IRO's wards receiving vocational training (Wyman 1998, p. 114).

During the first year of the IRO operation, in 1947/1948, the average intake of calories per day among DPs in Europe was less than 1600. By autumn 1948 this quantity increased to 2000 (Wyman 1998, p. 52). Since 1st October 1948, the wards of the IRO

in all three western zones of occupation in Germany received the same number of calories per day – 2800 for workers and 3100 for hard workers. This quantity was higher than the average allocation of food for German population but was in many cases lower than the physiological norm of consumption defined by the Economic Committee of the League of Nations in 1932 (Łuczak 1993, p. 80).

In July 1947, when the activity of the IRO towards DPs and refugees in Europe began, among all 647 504 wards of the organization 307 433 – 47, 48% of all IRO wards at that time – were of Polish nationality (citizenship). Poles were the most numerous national group of the wards of the IRO. At the same time the second most numerous national group of the wards were Ukrainians – 102 430 persons and many of them were of the former Polish nationality (as they had lived in the former eastern provinces of Poland, annexed by the Soviet Union after the Second World War)³. The total number of Jewish refugees under the mandate of the IRO in Germany, Austria and Italy on 31st August 1947 was 151 894. Among them, 118 921 Polish nationals composed 78, 29⁴.

As the refugees receiving IRO services only are concerned, on 31st July 1949, their number was 278 402, including 83 071 Poles (29,84% of the total number), 32 654 Hungarians (11,73%) and 27 143 Yugoslavians (9,75%). 157 097 of them resided in the three western zones of occupation in Germany (56,43%) and 35 058 in the three western zones of occupation in Austria and in Vienna Area (12,9%)⁵. On the 1st July 1950, the number of refugees assisted by the IRO was 248 441. During the whole period of the IRO's activities, till 1st July 1950, the number of refugees receiving IRO services was 1 499 600 (Frings 1951, p. 82).

During the years 1947-1951 the IRO helped about 1 619 000 registered DPs and refugees all over the world, including 973 000 in the western zones of occupied Germany. 604 556 of them lived in the three western zones of occupation in Germany. Among them, 712 675 people received care and maintenance inside camps, including

³ This information is issued from the archival document: Archives Nationales de France, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine (AN), International Refugee Organization (IRO), Ref. AJ 43/1256, Country of citizenship of Refugees receiving PCIRO Care and Maintenance on 31st July 1947.

⁴ This information is issued from the archival document: AN, IRO, ref. AJ 43/1256, Jewish refugees receiving PCIRO Care and Maintenance in Austria, Germany and Italy at 31st August 1947.

⁵ This information is issued from the archival document: AN, IRO, ref. AJ 43/457, IRO Assistance – Refugees receiving IRO services only, by country of citizenship, last habitual residence or ethnic group on 31st July 1949.

these taken over from UNRRA, IGCR and AJDC, and 366 000 received only aid in resettlement and legal protection living outside of camps. The rest of the IRO wards enjoyed the legal protection only (Holborn 1956, p. 189).

A specific problem for the IRO were so-called “hard core” cases – non-repatriable refugees whom it could not resettle abroad. These were aged or sick refugees. Their number changed within the time as many of them finally found the solution of their situation. On 30 June 1950 their number was estimated at 25 300 persons, including 16 900 institutional cases and 8 400 family members. By the beginning of 1951 this number was reduced to 11 000, and by the end of that year there were only 362 still not solved “hard core” cases (Holborn 1956, pp. 483, 492). The fate of all other refugees was positively settled thanks to cooperation of the governments, voluntary agencies and church organizations.

Legal and political protection

Another important aspect of the IRO mandate was the legal and political protection of refugees. It was important in case of many refugees who did not enjoy the consular protection of their country of origin, being either stateless *de iure* or *de facto*. The certificate of eligibility, confirming that a concerned person was within the mandate of the IRO, could serve as equivalent of national identity card for foreigners. In a number of countries the same certificate was indispensable to receive a so-called “London travel document” in accordance with the “London Agreement” of 15 October 1946 (that had initially referred to the refugees being concern of the IGCR).

In France, the main task of the IRO mission was indeed the legal protection of refugees. In 1948, there were in France 48 550 Poles who did not enjoy the Polish consular protection, who did not recognize the Polish government in Warszawa, and because of it they enjoyed the legal protection of the IRO in France (Sękowski 2014, p. 82; Łaptos 2015, pp. 693-694). Thus, within the Polish immigrant community in France were refugees of a completely new category, so that we can tell that the IRO has contributed to the extension of meaning of the concept “refugee” by the creation of the group of so-called “refugees *sur place*” (what means in French: “at place”).

Refugees *sur place* were all foreigners who did not recognize the government of their country of nationality and who did not enjoy its consular protection and who, because

of it, enjoyed the legal protection of the IRO. The IRO fulfilled in such cases the quasi-consular functions. In case of France, even if the French government did not recognize “refugees *sur place*” issued from the Polish immigrant community of the interwar period as refugees, the same government recognized the documents delivered to “refugees *sur place*” – being nationals of a foreign country by the IRO office in France (Sękowski 2015, pp. 25, 459)⁶.

In 1948, as a result of the exchange of letters between the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the IRO office in France, the French government finally agreed to recognize as refugees foreigners provided with refugee status by the IRO⁷.

From the other hand, the IRO did not recognize as being under its mandate the *Volksdeutsche* – people of ethnic German origin who had declared themselves voluntarily to be citizens of the Third Reich, even if due to the expulsions from the Central and Eastern European countries following the end of the Second World War, they were actually refugees (About children excluded from IRO aid because of their German origin: Douglas 2012, pp. 269, 281).

In December 1949, the IRO provided with the legal protection 86 465 refugees⁸.

Repatriation

The repatriation of DPs – that had been the main task of UNRRA towards this group of people – was one of three permanent solutions of the DPs and refugees issue projected in the IRO Constitution, together with the resettlement and the integration in the country of first refuge. Even if the majority of DPs desiring to return to their homelands did it during the years 1945-1947, with the aid from UNRRA, some of them still did not do it for some personal reason, others could change their mind – as actually it had been the case of many DPs previously repatriated under the UNRRA’s mandate.

However, it was evident for the international community that the repatriation remained a minor task of the IRO comparing to the resettlement of DPs and refugees who did not want to return to their homelands in other areas.

⁶ This Ph.D. thesis will be published in 2018 by Presses de l’Université Paris-Sorbonne (PUPS).

⁷ This information is issued from the archival document: Archives Nationales de France, International Refugee Organization (AN, IRO), ref. AJ 43/463, Letter: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of France to IRO General Representative in France, Paris, 5 August 1948.

⁸ This information is issued from the archival document: AN, IRO, ref. AJ 43/1256, Statistics of IRO for December 1949, p. 1.

The principal repatriation missions with which the IRO was in contact were those of Poland, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union.

Between 1st July 1947 and 31st December 1949, the IRO contributed to the repatriation of 68 778 DP's and refugees, including 36 932 repatriated to Poland (53,70%) and 6 091 to Yugoslavia (8,86%)⁹. Till the end of December 1951, the number of repatriated DP's and refugees increased to 72 914 persons, including 38 047 Poles (52,18%) and 6 870 Yugoslavians (9,42%). The final result of the IRO repatriation programme is presented in the Table 2.

Table 2. Refugees repatriated from specified IRO areas, 1st July 1947 – 31st December 1951

Country of destination	Area of repatriation								TOTAL
	Austria	France	Germany			Italy	Other European areas	Extra- Euro- pean areas	
			British zone	French zone	U.S. zone				
Poland	1 239	25	17 151	1 958	12 524	1 713	187	3 250	38 047
Yugoslavia	1 742	11	1 806	207	2 730	353	9	12	6 870
USSR	396	6	2 826	244	1 334	141	5	4	4 956
Other European countries	1 053	689	1 008	364	1 524	756	411	2 436	8 241
Other extra-European countries	237	14	377	20	2 862	122	21	11 147	14 800
TOTAL	4 667	745	23 168	2 793	20 974	3 085	633	16 849	72 914

Source: Own calculations of the Author basing on AN, IRO, ref. AJ 43/1257, Final Statistical Report of IRO, July 1947 to December 1951, Refugees repatriated from specified IRO areas, 1st July 1947-31st December 1951.

As the repatriation of Poles is concerned, between 1945 and 1950, during the whole period of the of the UNRRA and IRO action within the scope of this field, more than 820 000 displaced persons were repatriated to Poland only from three western zones of occupation in Germany, not counting more than 300 000 Poles repatriated during the same period from Belgium, Norway, France and other European and extra-European countries (Habielski 1999, p. 21).

⁹ This information is issued from the archival document: AN, IRO, ref. AJ 43/1256, Statistics of IRO for December 1949, p. 4.

Resettlement

The resettlement was the second one solution of the DPs and refugees problem under the IRO mandate projected in the IRO Constitution. Indeed, it was the most important and the most remarkable field of the IRO action during the whole period of its existence, even if it was also the most delicate issue, as the whole logic of resettlement was treated with hostility by the Soviet Union and other people's democracies. The resettlement of DPs and refugees under the mandate of the IRO was organized on the base of the series of agreements with the governments of countries of placement. Only the resettlement to USA and in some cases to Great Britain was organized without the IRO's contribution.

As far as the example of Poles is concerned, the admission of a certain number of Polish DPs from Germany was declared by the following countries: Argentina, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, France, the Netherlands, Paraguay, Peru, USA and Venezuela (Łuczak 1993, p. 40). During the IRO activity, till the end of 1951, 60 308 Poles (civilians and former soldiers) moved to Australia. As Canada is concerned, till the end of 1947 about 2 800 Poles were resettled there, following the recruitment conducted by the Canadian missions in the western zones of occupation in Germany. During the whole period of the IRO activity, till the end of 1951, 46 961 Poles were resettled in Canada, including former soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces in the West. Between 1949 and 1952, 847 Polish DPs emigrated to New Zealand (Habielski 1999, pp. 52-53; Radomski 2009, pp. 165, 167, 169).

As the resettlement in France is concerned, in 1948, there were in this country 11 850 Polish DPs, employed via the French national specialized agency – *Office national de l'Immigration*. The relative failure of this immigration action was due to the fact that the recruitment started by employment into the mines where the work conditions were especially hard. According to the common opinion, the conditions of work in mines were better in Belgium and in the Netherlands. Additionally, many DPs rejected the offers, not only from France, because of the difficulties in the family immigration and the clear preference for the single workers. The family reunions were accepted by the French government since 1949 (Sękowski 2014, p. 81).

An interesting case was the recruitment to the mines in Belgium. In the second half of 1947 some 16 000 DPs arrived there from the DP camps but many of them soon became unsatisfied with the labor conditions and started to come back to their DP camps. That is why the IRO should have finally decided that since a DP had not been truly “resettled”, he was still eligible for other resettlements schemes (Wyman 1998, p. 189).

The IRO’s real opportunities of performance of the resettlement action were limited by the logistic conditions. In 1948, the IRO that had the practical monopoly of the organization of overseas migration, disposed of 25 ships, able to move 230 000 people (Habielski 1999, p. 47).

Among the obstacles in the resettlement action of the IRO was the loss of the ethos and of the habit of work by numerous DPs after having spent whole years in DP camps without job but with the aid from the international community and military occupational authorities. For some number of residents of DP camps, such a way of life seemed to be the easiest one. This tendency did not escape the attention of the IRO staff¹⁰.

Furthermore, the strong preference for overseas migration has to be mentioned as an important reason for the limited success of the European resettlement schemes. Many DPs and refugees believed that the emigration as far as possible from Europe removed a risk of war¹¹. Another cause of this situation was the lack of sufficient place for resettlement of the masses of DPs and refugees in the Western Europe. It contributed to the creation of various restrictions on admission immigrants¹².

To return once again to the example of Poles – the most numerous national group under the IRO’s mandate: in the first half of 1949 in the western zones of occupation in Germany were still 125 000 Polish wards of the IRO – 63 00 in the British zone, 52 000 in the U.S. zone and 10 000 in the French zone (Habielski 1999, pp. 49–50). Among the factors contributing to resettlement of Poles outside Germany and Austria, the adoption of the *Displaced Persons Act of 1948*, known as the *DP Act*, by the U.S.

¹⁰ This information is issued from the archival document: AN, IRO, ref. AJ 43/430, The International Refugees Organisation's Report on Resettlement of non-repatriable refugees and Displaced Persons, 1947.

¹¹ This information is issued from the archival document: Bibliothèque Polonaise de Paris, Fonds of Józef Jakubowski, prov. ref. 35, *Zagadnienie osiedlenia Polaków z Niemiec na terenie Francji* [Question of the placement of Poles from Germany on the territory of France], [1948].

¹² This information is issued from the archival document: AN, IRO, ref. AJ 43/172, Generalities about the repartition of the DPs in Europe : "Western Europe, French Union and Near East", 1948/1949.

Congress was one of the most important steps. Thanks to this law, 205 000 DPs of Central and Eastern European origin would be admitted by the USA during the period of three years. The concerned DPs should have been moved to Germany, Austria or Italy due to the war, before the 22 December 1945 and still be there on 1st January 1948, except the quota of 2 000 Czechs having fled Czechoslovakia during the first half of 1948 and 3 000 orphans that had found themselves in Germany, Austria or Italy between 1st September 1939 and 30 June 1948. While between 1st July 1947 and June 1948 the total number of Poles resettled in USA via IRO was 4 549, during the period between July 1948 and the end of 1951 the number of Poles being admitted in the USA was 106 017. Among those 110 566 Poles, about 10 500 were former soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces in Great Britain (Radomski 2009, p. 170).

In 1952, when the mission of the IRO was accomplished, the placement of the Polish DPs and refugees – former IRO wards was the following: 44% of them lived in North America, 17% in Europe, 17% in Australia, 15% in Asia (this position concerned almost exclusively Polish Jews having emigrated to Israel) and 5,5% in South and Central America (Habielski 1999, p. 55). As the Polish Jews are concerned, till 1951, 2/3 of them emigrated to Palestine, since May 1948: to Israel (Łuczak 1993, p. 40).

Till the end of December 1949, the IRO contributed to the resettlement of 690 145 refugees. 483 905 of them departed from Germany (70,12%), 97 431 departed from Austria (14,12%) and 44 719 from Italy (6,48%)¹³. Among them: 150 843 were placed in USA (21,86%), 116 368 in Israel (16,86%) and 105 485 in Australia (15,28%)¹⁴.

Till the end of the IRO's activities, it contributed to the resettlement in new placements of 1 038 750 DPs and refugees all around the world. Among them 357 635 were Poles (34,43%), including Jewish refugees of Polish nationality, and 113 677 were Ukrainians (10,94%), including ex-Polish nationals.

The total number of Jewish refugees resettled by the IRO was 231 548 (22,29% of all resettled DPs and refugees) and the majority of them were of Polish nationality. The main destinations during the whole IRO resettlement programme were: USA for 328 851 persons (31,66%, thanks to the *DP Act*), Australia for 182 159 persons (17,54%) and Israel for 132 109 persons (12,72%).

¹³ This information is issued from the archival document: AN, IRO, ref. AJ 43/1059, Refugees departed for resettlement from specified IRO areas between 1st July 1947 and 28 February 1949.

¹⁴ This information is issued from the archival document: AN, IRO, ref. AJ 43/1256, Statistics of IRO for December 1949, p. 4-5.

The details of the final results of the IRO resettlement programme are provided in the Table 3.

Table 3. Refugees of specified country of citizenship, last habitual residence or ethnic origin resettled by IRO, 1st July 1947-31st December 1951

Country of destination	Country of citizenship, last habitual residence or ethnic group						TOTAL
	Poland	Ukrainians	Yugoslavia	Balts	Others	Jewish refugees*	
USA	110 566	45 044	17 213	77 454	78 574	64 930	328 851
Australia	60 308	19 607	23 350	35 695	43 199	8 172	182 159
Israel	54 904	35	83	1 238	75 849	130 408	132 109
Other countries	131 857	48 991	41 444	49 195	124 144	28 038	395 631
TOTAL	357 635	113 677	82 090	163 582	321 766	231 548	1 038 750

* Jewish refugees are included in the preceding columns under their country of citizenship or last habitual residence.

Source: Own calculations of the Author basing on AN, IRO, ref. AJ 43/1257, Final Statistical Report of IRO, July 1947 to December 1951, Refugees of specified country of citizenship, last habitual residence or ethnic group departed for resettlement, 1st July 1947-31st December 1951.

The execution of the resettlement programme by the IRO administration, including “probably the greatest organized transoceanic exodus in history” (Holborn 1956, p. 469) was commonly considered as a great success of this organization and of the international community.

International Tracing Service

The IRO had its specialized field dealing with searching of relatives lost during the Second World War – the International Tracing Service (ITS). The ITS was the continuation of the Central Tracing Bureau (CTB) created in 1945 by the Combined Displaced Persons Executive in the territories occupied by Allied powers. Till the end of June 1947, it was UNRRA that traced individuals within its mandate and searched in Germany and Austria the sought relatives, through the CTB and zonal offices.

Since 1st July 1947 the CTB was taken over by the IRO. According to the resolution adopted on 31st October 1947 by the Executive Secretary of the PCIRO, the ITS was created on 1st January 1948, basing on the CTB and its staff, but with the extension of its mandate on the tracing of all non-German nationals and German nationals that would be eligible within the IRO mandate. The headquarters of the ITS was placed in Bad Arolsen, in the U.S. zone of occupation in Germany, as previously the CTB.

The 1949 was the peak year of effective work of the ITS under the IRO's headship. Then the Child Search Programme was launched. From 1st January 1948 to 1st January 1951, nearly 220 303 individual tracing requests from approximately 100 countries were handled and the fate of at least 26 797 was positively established (Holborn 1956, p. 334). As we can see, the duties of the ITS exceeded the scope of mandate of the IRO, as the searching concerned not only the IRO wards.

Furthermore, the structure of the ITS was never fully integrated into the IRO administrative structure. However, the Child Search Programme and the whole ITS activity till April 1951 belongs to the IRO history.

On 1st April 1951, the ITS was placed under the headship of the Allied High Commission of Germany. The ITS is still acting in Bad Arolsen in Germany as an archive and a center for documenting the Nazi persecution and the fate of survivors from the Nazi era.

End of IRO

The end of the mission of the IRO in Germany was initially fixed on 30 June 1950. However, at the end of June 1950, there were still 235 892 "potentially resettlable" refugees under the IRO mandate. As Polish wards of IRO are concerned, on 1st July 1950, there were still 80 324 Polish DPs in the western zones of occupation – 38 018 in the British zone, 32 118 in the U.S. zone and 10 188 in the French zone. Since this date the DPs still remaining in Germany received the allowances from the federal and Land budgets. By the end of 1950, the number of all IRO "potentially resettlable" wards was 167 883. The IRO a limited action was continued towards its remaining wards and the organization was looking for the best solution of the question of residual groups in the countries of first refuge. The dead-line for IRO operations was finally postponed to 31st March 1951, with the extension of its operational programme to 30

September 1951. The resettlement dead-line for new refugees was postponed to the 1st October 1950 (Holborn 1956, p. 559; Łuczak 1993, p. 234).

The transfer of responsibility for the remaining refugees to the Austrian government took place on 1st July 1950. However, the activity of the IRO in Austria lasted till the 31st December 1951, even if the volume of its aid to refugees was considerably reduced since the end of June 1950 (Pilch 1994, p. 191; Holborn 1956, p. 477). Many DPs still remaining in Germany or Austria had been not accepted by any country of resettlement because of their sickness or handicap. The only one exception of this policy was Israel that – according to the statement of the IRO director general – admitted all Jewish refugees: “No Jewish refugee ever has been found to be too sick, too poor, too helpless for admission and warm welcome by Israel” (Wyman 1998, p. 203).

In cases of Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland, the remaining refugees were taken over by the respective governments on 1st July 1950. In Denmark such transfer was made on 31st March 1951.

In Italy, where the economic situation was very difficult at that time, the IRO continued its work after 1st July 1950 (Holborn 1956, pp. 474, 478).

The “supplementary period”, when the IRO activity was focused on the closing of the resettlement programme and on the searching for the best solution of the “hard core” wards’ issue, lasted till 28 February 1952.

On 1st February 1952, the IRO’s resettlement programme ceased and on 1st March 1952 the IRO went into liquidation. Its mission, in new conditions, was continued by the United Nations High Commissioner’s Office for Refugees.

What conclusions can be drawn from the IRO experience?

The IRO’s activity between 1947 and 1951 proves how efficient might be a common action of a limited number of states through the cooperation of their governments within the scope of an international specialized agency focused on the problem of displaced persons and refugees. The joint effort of just eighteen governments of United Nations member states was sufficient to solve one of the leading problems of the immediate post-war Europe. Financed by its member states, a specialized agency such as

the IRO is able to build its own experienced staff, composed of clerks of many nationalities, not only those of member states of an organization and including nationals of countries of origin of refugees/displaced persons.

The institutional political limits of the action of an international organization towards displaced persons and refugees might be complemented by the activity of accredited voluntary societies, independent in their opinions and subsidized for their assistance within the strict scope of an international organization's mandate.

The practice of resettlement of refugees and displaced persons (who in the meantime became *de facto* refugees as they resisted against the repatriation to their homelands) was the hallmark of the IRO's activity. The recruitment of the suitable immigrants by the missions of countries interested in the immigration of the labour force based on the agreements signed between the IRO and respective governments. The IRO was responsible for the assurance of the minimum required conditions in the recognized interests of its wards. It seems that this solution merits the attention of the contemporary international community too.

An international specialized agency focused on the solving of the refugee problem may fulfill the quasi-consular functions towards displaced persons and refugees under its mandate, deprived of the legal protection of their countries of nationality/last nationality in case of stateless persons.

The International Refugee Organization was a specialized agency acting in a specific time of the immediate post-war period when the masses of displaced persons and refugees were outside their countries of origin and could not remain at place of their momentaneous residence. It was the suitable and efficient way to solve the DPs and refugees problem at the time of the crisis connected with the massive presence of refugees. This model or at least its selected elements merit a deeper examination as a temporary instrument of the international community also nowadays, during such critical periods; instead of the uncoordinated operations of egoistic countries. A certain above-mentioned elements of the IRO's experience could be used at the European level, inside the European Union, too.

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